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Government Administration and Elections Committee

Public Hearing Testimony

Monday, March 23, 2009

Senator Gayle Slossberg, Senator Edward Meyer, Senator Michael McLachlan, Representative James Spallone, Representative Joe Aresimowicz, Representative John Hetherington and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I would like to thank you for scheduling H.B. 5370, *An Act Concerning Public Projects And The State Flower*, for a public hearing today.

Shortly after my election a constituent group approached me about working to save our state flower, Mountain Laurel. Within a few minutes of talking to the group's leader, Theresa Cannavo, it became clear that this volunteer organization was dedicated to that cause. Cannavo, for one, had plans to pursue nonprofit status. And planning to spread their message she had even reserved space at the state's annual flower expo in Hartford. I took her up on an offer to see their good work in action. I did it the hard way: I spent an afternoon clearing brush at a state park in Winchester where Mountain Laurel had once been plentiful but now fights for survival under pressure from other species of vegetation that's been allowed unbridled growth. The Mountain Laurel Revival Project had an expert helping to guide its efforts. They had already identified a hybrid species of Mountain Laurel that suited their mission: legislation that would require plantings at state-funded projects to include a certain percentage of Mountain Laurel. But my focus at that time—and this remains the case—was on our state's budget, namely my duty to help shepherd Connecticut through the most serious fiscal crisis most of us have ever seen. Still, I felt strongly about honoring this group's good community work and submitted this bill to give them the voice today they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.